

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-08

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8084

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 1781

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LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, SCUL, PFOR

SUBJ: ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL

1. SUMMARY. ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL ISSUE AT IMPASSE. GOC ATTITUDE SEEMS TO BE THAT "CASE IS CLOSED" AND ONLY ISSUE REMAINING IS THAT OF COMPENSATION FOR SCHOOL PROPERTY. GOC MIN EDUCATION CASTRO MAY NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND IMPORTANCE USG ATTACHES TO SCHOOL ISSUE OR TO CONSEQUENCES OF EXPELLING US HOLY CROSS FATHER PLASKER FROM COUNTRY. EMBASSY APPROACHING GOC TO SUGGEST SUSPENSION OF EXPULSION ORDER AND TO MAKE CLEAR OUR INTEREST IN ST. GEORGE'S ISSUE.

2. NOW THAT GOC HAS ALL BUT SLAMMED DOOR, HOLY CROSS APPARENTLY WILLING TO CONDUCT NEGOTIATIONS IN SANTIAGO RATHER THAN THROUGH AMBASSADOR HEITMANN, WHO ACCORDING TO THEIR INFORMATION HAS BEEN ORDERED BY GOC TO STEP OUT OF CASE. HOWEVER, IT STILL UNCLEAR WHETHER GOC WILL PARLEY OR WHETHER CONGREGATION WILLING TO USE CARDINAL AS NEGOTIATOR. ACCORDING TO HOLY CROSS REPS CARDINAL'S PROPOSAL TO RESTRUCTURE SCHOOL'S EXECUTIVE BOARD GIVING JOINT CONTROL TO HIMSELF AND HOLY CROSS FATHERS, WITH MINORITY GOC REPRESENTATION, IS ACCEPTABLE TO THEM.

3. WE BELIEVE CARDINAL'S INTERCESSION WOULD PROVIDE BEST  
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OPPORTUNITY FOR RESOLVING PROBLEM. TO AVOID EXPROPRIATION OF

SCHOOL BY GOC, A STRONGER PRESENTATION OF USG POSITION IS ADVISABLE. WE SUGGEST DEPT APPROACH FATHER LEWERS FOR HIS READING OF CURRENT SCENE AND TO DETERMINE WHETHER US CONGREGATION WILLING TO HAVE CARDINAL TAKE ACTIVE ROLE IN NEGOTIATION. END SUMMARY.

4. TWO-WEEK VISIT TO SANTIAGO OF HOLY CROSS CONGREGATION ASSISTANT PROVINCIAL GALLAGHER AND FATHER RICHARD WARNER MAY HAVE MADE CLEAR TO US CONGREGATION NEED FOR GREATER FLEXIBILITY ON ITS PART IN NEGOTIATING ST. GEORGE'S ISSUE IN VIEW OF TOUGH GOC LINE. WARNER AND GALLAGHER UNABLE TO SPEAK WITH MIN EDUCATION CASTRO WHO OUT OF COUNTRY FOR MOST OF THEIR STAY. THEY DID MEET, HOWEVER, WITH ST. GEORGE'S GOC-APPOINTED RECTOR DELEGATE VERDUGO, WHO INFORMED THEM THAT "CASE IS CLOSED" AND THAT GOVT WOULD SOON BEGIN DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING COMPENSATION FOR SCHOOL PROPERTIES. SIMILAR STATEMENT MADE TO PRIESTS BY UNDER SECRETARY OF EDUCATION RETAMAL. LATTER HOWEVER INDICATED POSSIBILITY THAT MIN EDUCATION CASTRO MIGHT CHANGE HIS MIND AND WOULD INFORM NEWLY APPOINTED HOLY CROSS REPS (SEE BELOW) ON OR ABOUT APRIL 4 OF HIS DECISION.

5. IN ADDITION TO SEEING FATHERS GALLAGHER AND WARNER, I HAVE ALSO RECENTLY DISCUSSED ST. GEORGE'S WITH CARDINAL SILVA AND WITH INTERESTED LAWYER JAIME BELLALTA, BOTH OF WHOM EXPRESSED PESSIMISM OVER POSSIBILITY OF TURNING GOVT AROUND ON THIS ISSUE. CARDINAL HAS, AT HOLY CROSS'S REQUEST, REMOVED HIMSELF FROM ACTIVE NEGOTIATION. HE HAS, HOWEVER, TOLD MIN EDUCATION CASTRO THAT HE WILLING TO CALM WATERS BY HELPING REMOVE CERTAIN CONTROLVERSIAL PRIESTS FROM COUNTRY, RATHER THAN HAVE THEM EXPELLED BY GOVT. HE ALSO INDICATED HE STILL WILLING TO NEGOTIATE ISSUE IF GIVEN PERMISSION TO DO SO BY HOLY CROSS CONGREGATION.

6. IN LAST CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF BEFORE THEIR MARCH 30 DEPARTURE FATHERS WARNER AND GALLAGHER, ACCOMPANIED BY FATHER PLASKER, REPORTED THAT CARDINAL'S OFFICE HAD BEEN CALLED BY OFFICE OF UNDER SECRETARY INTERIOR WHICH ANXIOUS TO CARRY OUT EXPULSION ORDER FOR PLASKER, READY SINCE EARLY FEBRUARY. EMBOFF EXPLAINED TO PRIESTS THAT EMBASSY UNABLE TO INTERVENE IN QUESTION OF GOC SOVEREIGNTY. HOWEVER, WE WOULD MAKE KNOWN CONFIDENTIAL

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TO GOC THEIR OPINION (WHICH I ALSO SHARE) THAT PLASKER'S EXPULSION AT THIS TIME WOULD ONLY EXACERBATE ISSUE. (WE HAVE DONE THIS VIA UNDER SECRETARY OF INTERIOR, SEE SEPTTEL).

7. MORE DISTURBING WAS WARNER AND GALLAGHER'S REPORT FROM A SOURCE THEY DEEMED RELIABLE THAT CASTRO BELIEVES EMBASSY NOT TRULY INTERESTED IN CASE. PRIESTS WERE QUICK TO ASSERT THAT THEY DID NOT FEEL THIS TO BE CASE. EMBOFF SURMISED THAT CASTRO MIGHT

HAVE BEEN MISQUOTED OR THAT HE SIMPLY MISINTERPRETED AS LACK OF INTEREST ON OUR PART EMBASSY'S EMPHASIS ON NECESSITY FOR DIRECT GOC-HOLY CROSS NEGOTIATIONS AND MY STATEMENT TO CASTRO THAT THIS WAS NOT ISSUE BETWEEN GOC AND USG "AT THIS STAGE." PRIESTS WERE TOLD THAT EMBASSY WOULD CORRECT ANY MISUNDERSTANDING ON CASTRO'S PART.

8. IN FINAL CONVERSATION PRIESTS SEEMED TO HAVE RETREATED FROM INITIAL ASSERTIONS THAT "PRINCIPLE" DICTATED NEGOTIATIONS MUST TAKE PLACE IN WASHINGTON AND THAT FIRM STANCE MUST BE MAINTAINED VIS A VIS GOVT ON RIGHT TO DETERMINE WHO TEACHES AT ST. GEORGE'S, E.G. PLASKER, WHELAN, ETC. PRIESTS REPORTED THEY HAD JUST LEARNED THAT AMBASSADOR HEITMANN HAD BEEN ORDERED AS OF FEBRUARY 28 TO REMOVE HIMSELF FROM NEGOTIATIONS, THUS EFFECTIVELY CLOSING DOWN WASHINGTON CHANNEL. PRIESTS HAVE NOW AGREED TO DEFER DISCUSSION OF PERSONALITIES UNTIL OTHER MAJOR ISSUES ARE SOLVED.

9. PRIESTS STATED THAT HOLY CROSS CONGREGATION HAS APPOINTED TWO NEW REPRESENTATIVES IN CHILE, ONE A PRIEST AND THE OTHER A LAWYER, TO DEAL WITH GOC ON ST. GEORGE'S. HOWEVER, WARNER AND GALLAGHER DID NOT MAKE CLEAR WHETHER REPS HAVE FULL NEGOTIATING AUTHORITY AND WHETHER THIS AUTHORITY WILL ALLOW THEM TO STEP ASIDE FOR CARDINAL.

10. COMMENT AND ACTION REQUESTED. WE REQUEST DEPT TO CONFER WITH PROVINCIAL LEWERS AS SOON AS HE HAS HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS TRIP WITH WARNER AND GALLAGHER. CLARIFICATION OF AUTHORITY OF REPRESENTATIVES HERE WOULD BE APPRECIATE AS WELL AS LEWERS' CURRENT READING OF SCENE.

11. PRIESTS' COMMENTS TO EFFECT THAT CASTRO NOT CONVINCED OF USG RESOLUTENESS REGARDING ST. GEORGE'S MAY BE TRUE, GIVEN CONFIDENTIAL

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GENERAL "CASE IS CLOSED" ATMOSPHERE AND MINISTER'S BACKGROUND AND PERSONALITY. HE IS INSENSITIVE TYPE WHO MAY NOT HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED BY NICETIES OF DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE I HAVE USED TO DATE.

12. IF DEPT AGREES, I WOULD BE WILLING TO SEE CASTRO AGAIN AND, IF NECESSARY, OTHERS TO EXPRESS OUR DIRECT AND LIVELY CONCERN OVER ST. GEORGE'S. AT THIS STAGE WE CAN ONLY CONTINUE TO URGE GOC NEGOTIATE WITH HOLY CROSS. HAPPILY, WE CAN AT LEAST NOW SAY THAT THESE NEGOTIATIONS CAN TAKE PLACE IN SANTIAGO. I REITERATE MY BELIEF, AND REQUEST DEPT SO INFORM HOLY CROSS THAT THE CARDINAL AND THE CHURCH APPEAR TO ME TO OFFER THE BEST CHANCE FOR MOVING THIS ISSUE TOWARD ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION. I SHOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO URGE GOC TO ALLOW CARDINAL TO WORK OUT A SOLUTION BUT OF COURSE NEED HOLY CROSS AGREEMENT TO DO SO.

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